Life Chances

00:05"LIFE CHANCES" "Four Families In A Changing Cypriot Village"
00:15[sil.]
00:20[music]
00:30NARRATOR This is a village we'll call Kalo in a fertile plane of Western Cyprus. It is much richer than most other Cypriot villages but nevertheless, in certain ways what is happening here is happening elsewhere to many other rural communities under the impact of modern, social, and economic change. From the distance, the houses all look alike but when you get closer, they move apart to show the recent history of the village as well as the social differences between families. Houses built from mud bricks still survive and before 1940, these were the only houses.
01:15[sil.]
NARRATOR Then came a period when the mud brick was modernized with the coat of plaster and the design also changed. In the old days, a present family could build its house with only a little help from carpenters and masons for doors, windows, and roof beams.
01:45NARRATOR Everyone knew how to make mud bricks. This big walled courtyard was built for a farming family who needed to protect their draft oxen, sheep, pigs, and chickens.
02:05[sil.]
02:10NARRATOR This man and his house go with the courtyard. They belong together and neither have many more years to go. The grandson, when he grows up, will not find the courtyard or these houses in his village for in the next 10 years, they will have gone. The last mud brick house would be lost to old man in breeches and waist coat.
02:35[sil.]
02:55NARRATOR The aim of every peasant family was economicself-sufficiency. You made wool from your sheep for your clothes. You plowed your lands with your oxen for you and your family's profits and food. That was the peasant's ideal. But if you are too poor, you plowed the land of others for enough bread to eat. The way men measured land was by how much of it one man with two oxen could plow from sunrise to sunset.
03:30[sil.]
03:35[non-English narration]
03:45[sil.]
04:00NARRATOR In the hungry 1930s, they measured wages by the cost of bread. Your wife took your corn, ground it on her stone hand mill and sifted it.
04:20[sil.]
NARRATOR That was how it was a few years ago. But now, this woman is the only village woman to produce breadevery day by the traditional methods. And she sells what she makes to the richer families. The rest buy their bread from a commercial bakery and only use these old methods for a few special holidays a year. Even then most used shop bought flour.
04:55NARRATOR The whole basis of economic life is changing and has been changing dramatically for at least 50 years. We have been looking at a few surviving

fragments, remains of a once more integrated world of peasant subsistence production. In that world, a successful family, the basic production unit had to master many skills to produce food, clothes, and build its dwellings. Fifty years ago, most of this house could have been built by any village family. This one could not. That is one measure of economic change. Thedivision of labor has grown more complex.
05:45[sil.]
06:00NARRATOR These men are leaving church after communion, different in age, they seem otherwise much of a peace. Fifty years ago, about 60% would have called themselves farmers. The rest were laborers, shepherds, and village based craftsmen. The village then numbered 647 souls, mostly illiterate. Today, less than 40% of farmers. There are still laborers but now also teachers, civil servants, policeman who own some land but commute to work outside the village. The population is nearly 1500 and very few are illiterates. And some men, the left wingers in particular, don't go to church very often. Modern politics has encouraged an institutionalized division of values in village life.
06:55[sil.]
07:05NARRATOR To the villagers, it all started with the water. Thisdrilling rig seeks to locate underground water reserves. In1916, the villagers formed shareholding companies to bring up this water by digging chains of wells. Gradually, improved methods have allowed much of the previously dry land to be irrigated. Before, only the winter rain supported a crop usually cereals. Since then, villagers have experimented with many cash crops and today grow potatoes, carrots, and citrus fruits for sale as world markets open up. The government with tax money helps pay for these costly concrete water channels. Just as 50 years ago, it broke the hold of the money lenders by setting up rural cooperative credit societies. It builds new roads, supports the import of motor vehicles which in turn bring the markets closer to the farmer. The tractor is another powerful agent of change. It allows a man to work far more land by himself than do oxen. He can work a lot of land with no hard labor. He used to feed his oxen from local frontiers but his tractor leaves off imported fuel and spares and needs a specialist mechanic. So tractors make farmers more efficient but also more dependent on external market factors and other specialists.In many places, tractors are accompanied by the concentration of land in fewer hands and an increased of landless laborers, but this has not happened in Kalo. For at least three reasons, land is relatively evenly distributed, small parcels yield high incomes, and small holders find extra sources of income.
09:10[sil.]
NARRATOR In many countries, rural people seemed to be getting relatively poorer as they get more involved in the world economic system. In Kalo, they are getting noticeablyricher. The older men see this in terms of food. In the 1930s, they tell you, "We work from sunrise to sunset for the price of a loaf of bread and we were hungry. Meat, we ate it once ortwice a year." Today, most villagers eat meat once or twice aweek and the richer ones, every day.
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10:00[sil.]

10:05NARRATOR What else do people do with the new found security? They build improved even luxurious houses. Every daughter must get married in her own new house, mostly paid for by her family.
10:20[sil.]
10:25NARRATOR Villagers give their children more and more education and then join their own leisure.
10:35[sil.]
10:40[non-English narration]
NARRATOR Among in many other changes, the whole mental horizon of villagers is changing. This young man comes from a family with little land. They've sent him to secondary school but now, he's off to England to get a qualification in hotel management. Once he would have been condemned to the life of a rural laborer.
11:20[non-English narration]
11:25[sil.]
11:30NARRATOR Unskilled laboring on the government road works, that's the bottom of the social ladder in Cyprus. Only a few old people do it in Kalo but many more in poorer districts. What factors determined who gets well in village life? A number of things. First, obviously, what a family has to begin with in land or cash? Next, how many children must have a share of it? In theory, all children have a moral right to an equal share of parent's property at marriage. In fact, girls must have a dowry house to get married. So girls simply cost a family more than boys and they earn less. So a round of boys is a financial blessing and a round of girls, a disaster. Personal qualities, health, strength, risk taking and share luck also play their part as we shall now see.
12:30[sil.]
12:40NARRATOR Let us now look at four closely related families. In one sense, they all started out roughly the same for they all descended from this old man,
Papa Loizos, the village priest. He died 35 years ago and if he'd lived till 1970, he'd be in his 90s. As was customary, he gave each of his children roughly equal amounts of property at marriage. His seven surviving children are aged between 55 and 70. We shall look at only four of them and some of the 20 grandchildren. The priest himself was middling in wealth but some would say on the poor side, for although he had a fair amount of land at one point, he also had a lot of children to share it. So none of them married with much property. This is the priest's first son, Xenon, with his bride Stella about 1925.Xenon got a house and half a hectare of good land from his parents. Stella in the end shared her parents' plentiful land with just one sister, so she had seven hectares, a very big holding. Xenon was strong and handsome which in village eyes made up for his luck of property, and he worked hard for Stella's father to replace the sons the old man never had. Xenon and Stella in middle age, the early years of hard work have paid off. Xenon is the village mayor, a highly successful farmer with contacts all over Cyprus. He employs laborers now on his property and the couple holiday in the mountain resort.
14:45[sil.]
14:50NARRATOR In 1958, Xenon died age 55. The marriage had been a happy one in spite of the problem that dogged its early years. Stella conceived 13 times and today she has one living child to show for it.

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15:10[sil.]
15:15[non-English narration]
NARRATOR This is Stella's daughter, Eleny, with one of her three children. Eleny did well in high school and her father with his savings sent her to England to Teachers College.Today, she is an inspector of education. Her mother shared the family land

with one sister but Eleny as an only child willpass all her mother and father's land as well as her husband's to their three children.
15:55[non-English narration]
NARRATOR This is Nikos, Eleny's husband. Nikos is from the next village. Like his wife, he comes in the prosperous farming family and has a London degree. He is a teacher. It was a good match, both highly educated with solid property and practically mavens. Nikos is a pioneer for he was one of the first educated men locally to start working with his hands. As a scientist, it seemed irrational to him to be a farmer's son to own land and yet not to work it. Besides,citrus trees need much capital to develop and Nikos simply didn't have enough spare cash to pay for all the work his lands needed. What he doesn't do himself, he supervises closely.
16:55[sil.]
17:05[non-English narration]
17:15NARRATOR The family all lived together in the capital, Nicosia, 25 miles away but they are often in the village working or supervising the landholdings. This makes life hectic for them. Luckily, they have a village house to camp in when necessary. But equally, old Stella, both in the village farming context and in managing the town house makes itpossible for the rest of the family to keep up their salary jobs for education.
17:50[sil.]
NARRATOR Eleny, coming back from a morning at the office, knows that her mother will have a family's lunch on the table. Eleny and Nikos spend much time driving the children back and forth in Nicosia for normal school and private lessons. As well as the frequent trips to the village for the land, cars keep the family going and time is a scarce commodity. Without Eleny's salary, they could not afford to invest so much in citrus trees. Eleny's father, Xenon, was proud to have built this large townhouse for his daughter for until then, no other man in the village had built such a splendid house either in the village or out of it.
19:00[sil.]
NARRATOR Their busy lives and economic success make them targets of envy in the village which through their land, they are still part of but from which in lifestyle, they are clearly also a part. Today, the children enjoy private music lessons and speak fluent English. They are more at ease in the city than the village and they're part of the urban elite. Their parents in many ways are still grounded in the village. How did this happen? Xenon we saw had little land of his own but lots of health, strength, and good looks. He married one of two wealthy sisters. His only child now well-endowed with land also married well. So accidentally, small families, goodmarriages, hard work, thrift, and brains have all combined to push this family over three generations out of the village towards the top of Cypriot urban society.
20:15[sil.]
NARRATOR Thomas, a grandson of the old priest. He was eight when his mother Maria died in 1931. She was 25 and had just born her third child. Maria had one hectare of irrigated land but Thomas only got a fifth of this, almost nothing. His sisters got more because they needed dowry houses and his father's land went to his second wife's children.
20:55[sil.]

NARRATOR Thomas was ready to take risks. In 1951, he borrowed 600 pounds and bought three quarters of a hectare with a water pump too. In '56, he added half a hectare but in '61, sold the lot for a healthy profit. Half of which went to buy two and a half hectares elsewhere,doubling his holding. He then planted more orange trees andcarried on. Today, he owes 8,000 pounds but his developed land is worth much more than this. Why the huge debts? Because in 20 years, he spent 3,000 pounds to get water forhis fields. He drilled nine boreholes. Two of them having the bad luck not to find water or to see it run dry in a few years.The turbine pumps can cause 2,000 pounds. He'd also put money into advanced sprinkler systems which in the long run save on water.
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22:15[sil.]
NARRATOR Meanwhile, he and his family had to live. Four children to feed, clothe, and educate. How does he live with such debts? Partly, because he has another job, secretary of the village cooperative store which now pays him 50 pounds a month although he can remember when it was just a five-pound(ph). The shop today turns over 50,000 pounds a year. So Thomas earns his salary. It's for heavy financial and administrative responsibility.
22:55[sil.]
NARRATOR But other income is provided by the rest of the family. His wife, Argero(ph), cultivates tomatoes for sale and sometimes as today, she is helped by her sister-in-law. Most of the tomatoes are sold in the village but some go to the town. It would be considered almost indecent for a village woman to drive a tractor, so the tomato operation needs Thomas' young son, Parlos(ph) as well.
23:35[sil.]
24:00NARRATOR When he isn't in school, Parlos(ph) is also responsible for selling the family's tomatoes in the village as well as a host of other agricultural jobs.
24:10[sil.]
24:25NARRATOR Thomas, because he started life with almost nothing and yet has built up property for his family, is widely respected in the village. He's a leader prominent on thepolitical left and committed to the success of the cooperative shop, which he and a few friends built up 20 years ago against some opposition. In those days, they were small private shopkeepers and the farmers inevitably got into debt to them. Now, because of a national bulk buying capacity, the local coops get things cheaply. Virtually, all village families are shareholders and spend on average nearly 200 pounds a year on food, clothing, and household goods.
25:10[non-English narration]
25:15[sil.]
25:25[non-English narration]

NARRATOR The government audits the bulks and administers the village elections to the management committee.
25:35[non-English narration]
25:40NARRATOR Thomas' wife, Argero(ph), is planting celery. Some of her working party are helping her and she will later help them, but others are working for daily wages. She herself has never since the day of her marriage worked for wages, and both she and Thomas take pride in this. In fact, it's a major dividing line in the village.
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26:10NARRATOR Thomas has one daughter on full scholarship in Moscow and one son doing military service. If he divided his land between his four children, they would be early small farmers and would need other jobs to live decently. But in any case, he doesn't want them to be farmers doing hardmanual work, carrying constant debts, and facing uncertainty. He would like them to take white-collar jobs, have more security, and live an easier life. But at the moment, neither he nor they know what job they'll do or even whether they'll end up living in the village or not.
26:50[sil.]
27:00NARRATOR This is Stelu(ph), another child of the priest Papa Loizos. She started marriage with one and a half hectares of irrigated land and this small house.
27:15[sil.]
NARRATOR Her husband was poor and she cannot read or write. Yet between them, they have raised four sons and twodaughters who, with one exception, all well-educated and well-paid white collar jobs married with children. The one exception is still studying. From such an inauspicious start, how did Stelu(ph) and her husband Yurkus manage it? Old Yurkus was originally a shoemaker but 30 years ago, he could read and write better than other young man in the village so he landed a better job, bookkeeper for the villageagricultural credit society. His painstaking labors brought in asmall but steady salary. This is Prokopis, the youngest child studying to be a doctor. By now, it's a tradition in the family to study but 20 years ago, when the first boy was in secondary school, old Yurkus had to be persuaded to keep him on. School fees cost money and Yurkus needed the boy's earning power but he stayed on a few more years atschool and then landed a well-paid clerical job. The next son did the same and then the third one. Their salaries took the financial strain of the old man and helped to pay the school and college fees of the younger girls and boy. Loizos, the third son, took a thousand pound loan from the teachers provident fund. Some of which helped his younger sisterPeva(ph) complete her studies. She too became a primary school teacher and borrowed the cash from the teachers union to build her dowry house. Her youngest sister went to university and became a secondary school teacher that's a much higher salary. The younger children tend to get more education and go further.
29:30[non-English narration]
NARRATOR One demographic fact which helped the family greatly was the birth order and sex because four out of six children were sons and the first three were sons, the familydid not have to pay out for the girls' marriages until the three boys had been earning for a number of years. This helped greatly. The family also

is highly unified in the long term.They've had their differences and some field, they have contributed more than others to the overall position of the family. But taken with the happy accidents of age, sex distribution, the social success of the parents is in large part due to the talents of their children showed for the educational ladder and for cooperation with each other and with their parents. None of these would have happened without the recent expansion of village education and the secondary school only three miles away. Without theschools, this family would probably have stayed poor.
30:40[non-English narration]
30:45[sil.]
31:10NARRATOR This is Yanis, the second son of the old priest. He's 70 years old and seven of his children are still alive from the 14 his wife conceived. He got one hectare of land at marriage and his wife another two hectares. Most of this went on the marriages of their older children, a son then five girls in a row, then another son. Yanis was in the British Army in the second World War and came back with several hundred pounds but he didn't buy more land with it and it quickly went. Now, he regrets this. The need to build houses for five daughters has reduced his life to the simple factor hard manual work. For watering other man's land, he gets about six-schelins(ph) an hour but he could be worst of for the men who work on the government's roads only get half this rate.
[sil.]
NARRATOR This is Maria, the oldest daughter who married a young shepherd in 1956. At that time, the house was modest but up to date. The refrigerator is one year old, the most modern and luxurious edition after 16 years of marriage.
32:55[non-English narration]
NARRATOR After Maria, Yanis married of two more daughters whose houses face hers. All the girls took paid work to help find the cost of the houses. Yanis would have preferred that they hadn't worked for outsiders but he simply had no choice and nor did they. Keeping the women at home is a luxury for men who are better off. But once married, these women do not often go out to work.
33:35[non-English narration]
33:40NARRATOR This is Yanis' oldest son. He's a police sergeant and helped his father a lot to marry off the girls but now he has a family of his own and lives far away. Yanis has moved from his old house to this, a one room dwelling just enough for him and his wife, but it's at the back of Eleny, their fourth daughter's house. So they have her company and assistance. Eleny has done well out of the recent rise and living standards. Her house is more modern than theirs of her three older sisters. But like them, she herself worked and saved hard to help her father pay for it and she didn't get married until she was 26. The oldest daughter married in 1956 and the fourth, Eleny in 1969. The family have built one house every four years but the houses cost more each time. Social pride is a strange thing. No one in the village is willing to be the first to build a plain, cheap, simple house if others are building ones like this. This is an ordinary village house in Kalo. It cost 2,500 pounds in raw materials and furniture without the labor or 1,200 days of old Yanis' sweating in the fields. Girls work for a pound a day, so the cost in women's labor would be 2,500 working days. If every penny was saved which of course it couldn't be. There's a

guest room although guests are rare. And no girl in Kalo starts marriage with less than 60 or 80 sheets. Most of which she will not need for many years if it's all.
35:35NARRATOR But to marry your children off properly is the strongest moral duty in a man's life. To have five daughters is simply bad luck. Yanis is tired but his pride is intact. Eleny's husband, Michaeles, son of a shepherd from another village. As a builder, he earns at least three pounds a day when he can find work which is more than his father-in-law earns. The old man was pleased when Michaeles asked for his daughter's hand because he knew then that it would be easier to get the dowry house built.

NARRATOR Old Yanis has one more daughter to marry on and her house is nearly finished. Hundreds more hours with the shovel and the heat of the fields will eventually see to it.It's on the sites of the old mud brick house where Yanis and his family lived for over 40 years. By knocking down the old house and building here, Yanis saved at least 500 pounds maybe more. Even when she's married, he'll still have several years laboring to pay off the outstanding debts. Butby then, his social debts will have been discharged. He would have married off five girls honorably in the sweat of his face and theirs. His youngest child is a boy who expects nothing from his father but like all other young man, he knows he will get a house from his bride to be.
37:25[sil.]
NARRATOR This film has been about some of the descendants of two ordinary Cypriot villagers and shows how over time people who started roughly on a level have children whose lives are very different.
37:40[sil.]
37:45NARRATOR What factors determine who gets well? Landobviously, how many children must share how much of it, sex ratio, and birth order. The culture penalizes a family with many girls and rewards one with many boys. Personality, appearance, health, the ability to exploit modern education, entrepreneurial drives all play a part too. To explain this emergent pattern of stratification, we must consider the culture, the economic structure, and properties of individuals in a complex relation. One final word, this film was about a rich village in a prosperous country. The poorest people you saw here are richer than most Indian villagers can never dream of being. This film is not typical of the third world but it does show how will rural people can do when they get good land, water, credits, and markets.
38:50[non-English narration]
39:00Research and photography: Peter Loizos Film Editor: Gregory Harris This film was made with funds generously given by The London School of Economics and Political Science and the University of London Central Research Fund IN JULY 1974 THIS AREA OF CYPRUS WAS OCCUPIED BY MAINLAND TURKISH FORCES AND THE GREEK POPULATION OF THE VILLAGE - SOME 95% - FEARING FOR THEIR SAFETY, MOVED OUT AND BECAME REFUGEES.